Chamber Music @ AEIVA

Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts

April 30, 2015

5:00 Gallery viewing and reception

5:30 Concert

String Quartet in F Major Maurice Ravel

II. Assez vif. Très rythmé (1875 – 1937)

Sarah Dennis, violin

Anne Donaldson, violin

Wendy Richman, viola

Laura Usiskin, cello

Sonata for Violin and Cello Maurice Ravel

I. Allegro (1875 – 1937)

II. Très vif

Anne Donaldson, violin

Laura Usiskin, cello

String Quartet No. 5 (1991) Philip Glass

(b. 1937)

Sarah Dennis, violin

Anne Donaldson, violin

Wendy Richman, viola

Laura Usiskin, cello

*Many thanks to AEIVA, UAB Department of Music, UAB Dean’s Office, Music Performance Trust Fund, and Michael J. and Mary Anne Freeman for making this event possible. Special thanks to Michael J. and Mary Anne Freeman for sponsoring today’s reception.*

**Program Notes**

From Arnold Schoenberg & Wassily Kandinsky to Gunther Schuller & Paul Klee, visual art and music have often intertwined. Today’s program features two composers whose music shares many qualities with the work of AEIVA’s current feature artist, Michael Velliquette. The String Quartet in F Major by Maurice Ravel, composed in 1903, achieves a multitude of vibrant, multi-layered textures through its use of extended techniques, including plucking, harmonics, and trills. The Sonata for Violin and Cello is conversational in nature, including a second-movement that ends, in the words of Michael Velliquette, as if the instruments “fall through a trap door in the floor.” The final piece on the program, Philip Glass’s String Quartet No. 5, has a recurring theme that gives it a cyclical quality reminiscent of the symmetry in Velliquette’s art. The quartet’s cross-rhythms and polyrhythms create a composite fabric just as Velliquette’s many individual pieces of paper come together to create a unified whole.

**Biographies**

**Anne Donaldson**, violin, received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music and her master's degree from Northwestern University, where she was the teaching assistant of Blair Milton. Ms. Donaldson was a member of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra from 2008-2012 and is co-founder and Assistant Director of STEP, the Suzuki Talent Education Program of Birmingham. She is the lead violinist of the Birmingham band String Theory and is currently the assistant concertmaster of the Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra. Anne also teaches at the Alabama School of Fine Arts and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. In her spare time, she enjoys improv comedy, improv cooking, and occasional performances with the National Symphony Orchestra in our nation's capital.

**Sarah Nordlund Dennis** currently performs as a first violinist with the Alabama Symphony Orchestra. Prior to joining ASO, she held positions with the Hong Kong Philharmonic and Sarasota Opera and performed with numerous regional orchestras. Her degrees are from the Cleveland Institute of Music and the University of Alabama, where she graduated Summa cum laude and minored in the Computer-Based Honors Program. She has performed chamber music in Germany and Hong Kong, as well as across the United States, from Baroque works to premiering new chamber works, including two quartets by Joseph Hallman available on iTunes. Her collaborators include faculty of CIM and UA, members of the Berlin Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic, and Hamburg Symphony, as well as her current colleagues. Sarah Nordlund Dennis has been a member of the Omega String Quartet at Lutheran Summer Music and the Birmingham-based Amion Quartet. Aside from performing, she also teaches with the Suzuki Talent Education Program of Birmingham and has a son who just turned one.

Violist **Wendy Richman** has been hailed by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Baltimore Sun* for her "absorbing," "fresh and idiomatic," “dramatic and poetic” performances with "a brawny vitality." She has been featured at major venues and international festivals in Berlin, Boston, Darmstadt, Edinburgh, Helsinki, Hong Kong, Morelia, New York City, Rome, San Francisco, Vienna, and Washington. She regularly plays with the viola sections of the Minnesota Orchestra and St. Louis Symphony, and she has performed chamber music with the Claremont Trio and members of the Cleveland, Juilliard, Jupiter, and Takács Quartets. In addition to her extensive experience with traditional repertoire, Ms. Richman is a founding member of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), a world-renowned collective of 35 musicians that has been described as “the new gold standard for new music” by *The New Yorker*. Ms. Richman presented the American premieres of Kaija Saariaho's *Vent Nocturne* and, with husband Tim Feeney, Luciano Berio's *Naturale*. A native of Wisconsin, Ms. Richman is a graduate of Oberlin Conservatory and New England Conservatory and a doctoral candidate at Eastman School of Music. She studied viola with Carol Rodland, Kim Kashkashian, Jeffrey Irvine, Peter Slowik, and Sara Harmelink, and voice with Marlene Ralis Rosen. Her acclaimed recordings can be heard on Albany Records, Between the Lines, Bloodshot Records, BMOP/sound, Mode Records, NAXOS, New Focus, New World, and Tzadik.

Cellist **Laura Usiskin’s** musical interests are diverse, spanning early Baroque to 21st century music and solo to orchestral playing. She has performed throughout North America and Europe in such venues as Alice Tully Hall, Palazzo Chigi Saracini, Weill Hall, Barge Music, and many others. Recent performances include concertos of Dvorak and Takemitsu with the Montgomery Symphony Orchestra and performances of the complete Bach Suites in Los Angeles and Connecticut. From 2011 - 13 she served as Founder and Executive Director of the Montgomery Music Project, a program that provides intensive music instruction to underserved children in Montgomery. Ms. Usiskin received her Bachelor of Arts in Neuroscience and Behavior from Columbia University, Master of Music from The Juilliard School, and Doctor of Musical Arts from the Yale School of Music. Ms. Usiskin currently resides in Birmingham, AL, where she is Adjunct Professor at the University of Alabama – Birmingham and cello instructor at the Suzuki Talent Education Program. She regularly performs solo recitals and chamber concerts as a founding member of the Arté Trio.